

Creative Partnerships: changing young lives

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Introduction

'We believe that the best education has creativity at its heart.'

House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007

Creative Partnerships is the Government's flagship creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of children and young people across England, raising their aspirations, achievements, skills and life chances.

One of a number of programmes generated by the new national organisation Creativity, Culture and Education (CCE), the Creative Partnerships programme fosters innovative, long-term partnerships between schools and creative professionals, including artists, performers, architects, multimedia developers and scientists. These partnerships inspire young people, teachers and creative professionals to challenge how they work and experiment with new ideas.

In so doing, young people develop the skills they need to perform well, not only in exams and extra-curricular activities, but also to succeed in the workplace and wider society.



The programme

'It has generated excitement at the possibilities for real change in the outlook in some of the hotspots of deprivation and has opened the minds of all to the need for creative activity at the core of the school, and all its subject areas.'

Tony Lyng, Former Headteacher, Brockhill Performing Arts College

Why creativity?

We are committed to ensuring that all young people have access to a wide range of cultural and artistic experiences. In addition to the richness this adds to their lives and the enjoyment that confidence in accessing the arts will bring them in adulthood, we believe it also unlocks their creativity. Creativity brings with it the ability to question, make connections, innovate, problem solve, communicate, collaborate and to reflect critically. These are the skills that are demanded by today's employers. Above all, creative learning empowers young people to imagine how the world could be different and gives them the confidence and motivation to make positive change happen. This helps young people to engage with their education and to achieve.

Creative Partnerships programmes demand that young people play a full role in their creative learning. Our programmes are most effective when young people are actively involved in leading and shaping them, taking responsibility for their own learning and playing an active leadership role in school life.

Schools programmes

Creative Partnerships works with maintained schools from Key Stages 1 to 4 (ages 4–16) across England. Creative Partnerships begins with the needs of young people and their schools. It does not offer pre-packaged solutions, although it has a wealth of experience on which to draw. Instead, it brings resources and expertise.

In April 2008, Creative Partnerships relaunched its programmes. All schools we now work with belong to one of three distinct programmes with common national application criteria and processes. The three programmes are:

Schools of Creativity – a small cohort of 60 schools with a responsibility to develop their practice while sharing their learning with a network of other schools.

Change Schools – 800 schools whose development is supported by us for three years to bring about significant changes in their ethos, ambition and achievement.

Enquiry Schools – 1,200 schools that work with us for a year on resolving an identified issue within the school.

A school can apply to one of three Creative Partnerships Schools programmes according to its needs and its commitment to creative learning. Successful applicants always receive the support of a creative professional as well as financial support.

Selecting schools

Initially Creative Partnerships programmes were targeted at schools in the most deprived areas in England. However, it became clear that many schools face significant challenges and so the criteria and geographical remit of the programme has been broadened, although much of it remains focused on our poorest communities. Creative Partnerships programmes are delivered locally through a network of local organisations. Between them, we support schools in almost every local authority in England.

Recruitment to the Enquiry and Change Schools programmes is competitive and run by each local organisation. The recruitment process is operated within a national framework with common core criteria although each organisation works with local partners, especially the local authority's Children's Services Directorate, to develop additional local criteria, relevant to local needs. For example, in Nottingham programmes target social and economic deprivation while in rural Cumbria local criteria includes isolation.

There is an annual round of selection. In the Spring term schools apply, with selection being confirmed in the Summer term, allowing participants to engage in detailed planning at the start of the academic year and completing an annual programme by its end.

Creative Partnerships starts with the School Improvement Plan, which lays out the major priorities of each school. Sometimes it will help a

school develop its plan, in other cases it will take aspects of the plan and work with the school to develop projects that address the issues identified. One project may address the poor speaking and listening skills in a primary school's reception class. Another may explore how the geography curriculum can be made more attractive to young people at Key Stage 3. There are projects that have focussed entirely on re-engaging a small group of disaffected boys in Year 11, whose behaviour is affecting the aspiration and performance of the whole year.

To ensure our programmes are designed to meet the needs of schools and young people, we have introduced a new standardised application and selection process using common forms and procedures. The application form requires the school to be absolutely clear about why it wants to be part of the programme and how it has the capacity to do so.

In addition, all applications made by schools must now be accompanied by their School Improvement or Development Plan. This is so we can ensure that issues being addressed are adequately tracked by the school and available as evidence to external parties including Ofsted.

The Schools of Creativity Programme is fully managed by the Creativity, Culture and Education Schools Directorate.

8,520

Creative Partnerships projects completed

940,479

young people involved

6,483

creative organisations involved

54,023

parents involved

90,536

teachers engaged in local projects



'It has been a revelation to me that I can work with someone with such complementary expertise and how much this extends what together we are able to offer students.'

Secondary schoolteacher, Derbyshire

The role of creative professionals

Long-term relationships between creative professionals and schools lie at the heart of the Creative Partnerships process. Creative professionals work as creative agents, helping to devise the programme for a school, or as creative practitioners working directly with students and teachers.

By working with creative professionals from many different disciplines, young people can develop a variety of skills and experiences. Creative practitioners have different expectations of young people and when these are set high, children rise to the challenge.

Creative professionals also benefit from working in schools. By being exposed to new voices and different views, and the creative teaching methods of many of the teachers, they are challenged and their personal creative practice is enriched.

'Links with other providers such as the Creative Partnerships scheme are enriching the curriculum and improving standards. These enrichment activities create a good climate for learning and raise pupils' aspirations of what they can achieve.'

Ofsted report on Whytrig Community Middle School, 2007

Managing the process

Creative Partnerships ensures that teachers have the opportunity to plan in depth and where necessary have the time and resources to undertake further research. Working with the school, Creative Partnerships will identify appropriate creative practitioners and recruit them to work on the project. It will provide training to both teaching staff and creative practitioners to prepare them for working together.

Once the project is completed, Creative Partnerships encourages thoughtful evaluation and reflection, and will use the experience to revisit the School Improvement Plan. Often it will trigger changes to the plan as new priorities emerge from the experience.

Inevitably, this process generates new ideas and new projects, each more ambitious than the last. In the case of Change Schools, further planning, research, training and the identification of appropriate practitioners takes place.

Additional projects may include a primary school creating a curriculum around a single theme engaging every child and every teacher for a whole year, or a secondary school collapsing its entire curriculum for Year 7 into a single subject over which the English, History, Languages, Maths, Science and Art teachers have to collaborate to generate and deliver a coherent, multi-layered curriculum. In the case of Enquiry Schools, a period of reflection outside the programme may lead to another application to be part of the programme.



Assessing the impact

The Creative Partnerships effect

Independent research and reports by many parties including Ofsted and a Parliamentary Select Committee have shown that Creative Partnerships has a significant positive impact on everyone involved: young people, parents, teachers and schools as well as creative professionals. Since 2002, we have worked intensively with over 2,700 schools across England. More than 12,800 schools have had some involvement in the programme. The new programme structure introduced in April 2008 allows us to work with around 2,300 schools each year. This means that at any one time, around 10 per cent of schools in England are in one of our programmes.

'The school's work with Creative Partnerships has had a particularly beneficial impact and, without doubt, has added to the pupils' enthusiasm for school life and interest in the wider environment.'

Ofsted report on Briscoe Primary and Nursery, 2008



'Young people who have attended Creative Partnerships activities made, on average, the equivalent of 2.5 grades better progress in GCSE than similar young people in other schools'

National Foundation for Educational Research, 2008

The impact on academic attainment

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) completed a study of 13,000 young people who had participated in Creative Partnerships activities. NFER found that:

'Young people known to have attended Creative Partnerships activities out-performed those in the same schools ... at all three Key Stages. This was evident in average scores in English, Mathematics and Science, in Key Stages 2 and 3 and in total points scores, best 8 points scores and Science at Key Stage 4.'¹

The tracking of the same 13,000 young people has continued and NFER submitted a further report in 2008 which concluded that the improvement in academic attainment, though small, is being maintained:

'There are positive messages for Creative Partnerships. While effect sizes are relatively small, the results of this study suggest that Creative Partnerships is contributing to improved levels of attainment. For example, young people who have attended Creative Partnerships activities made, on average, the equivalent of 2.5 grades better progress in GCSE than similar young people in other schools.'²

This reflects the observations of head teachers of Creative Partnerships schools who were surveyed by British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) in 2006.³ BMRB reported that:

- 75 per cent of head teachers surveyed had observed improvement in academic standards at their schools as a result of being involved in Creative Partnerships programmes.

- 79 per cent had observed improvements in attainment as a result of being involved in Creative Partnerships programmes.

This impact was most evident in schools in the most deprived wards where 81 per cent of head teachers had observed improvements in both educational standards and attainment as a result of their involvement in the programme.

The impact on parents

A key predictor of the academic attainment of young people is the degree to which their parents are involved in their education. For this reason, Creative Partnerships commissioned a report in 2006 from the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE)⁴ into the extent to which Creative Partnerships programmes encourage parents to engage with their child's education. Published in December 2007, this report found:

- When children are engaged in short-term or long-term creative projects they extensively describe these experiences at home.
- When creative projects in school are sustained, parents feel they understand more about what their children are learning in school, and they begin to develop perspectives on their children as learners and on what constitutes learning in and out of school.
- Parents perceive creative programmes as offering alternative long-term benefits which positively influence children's aspirations as well as their learning.



- Creative programmes offer low-risk invitations which encourage some parents to engage with teachers and the whole school, in some cases taking on employment at the school as a result of initial involvement in creative projects.
- Such projects also involve some parents in social networks of other adults in the wider community.
- Children's engagement with creative programmes leads some parents to reflect on themselves as learners and to take up cultural and other learning opportunities for themselves as well as for their children.
- Creative Partnerships offers strong models for developing and sustaining wider family learning as well as parental involvement in children's learning.

¹ 'The longer term impact of Creative Partnerships on the attainment of young people', National Foundation for Educational Research, February 2006, pg. 22, para 5.3

² 'The longer-term impact of Creative Partnerships on the attainment of young people: Results from 2005 and 2006', National Foundation for Educational Research, September 2008, pg. 3

³ Creative Partnerships: Survey of Head Teachers', British Market Research Bureau, April 2006

⁴ 'Their Learning Becomes Your Journey: Parents Respond to Children's Work in Creative Partnerships', Centre for Literacy in Primary Education, December 2007

The wider impact on pupils, schools and teachers

The independent survey of head teachers conducted by British Market Research Bureau (BMRB) referred to previously also assessed the wider impact of the programme.

Of the secondary schools surveyed:

- 92% reported an improvement in pupils' confidence
- 91% reported an improvement in pupils' communication skills
- 87% reported an improvement in pupils' motivation
- 80% reported an improvement in pupils' enjoyment of school
- 78% reported an increase in pupils' ability to learn independently
- 70% reported an improvement in pupils' behaviour.

The impact on teachers was also considerable with:

- 94% of head teachers reporting an improvement in the teaching skills of their teachers
- 92% of head teachers reporting their teachers to be more effective in using creative professionals in the classroom
- 92% of head teachers reporting their teachers are more willing to take a creative approach.

The impact on attendance

More effective teaching, combined with better motivated pupils and stronger parental engagement would explain the impact on attainment described above, but is likely to have an effect on other aspects of pupil behaviour.

In 2008, NFER explored the impact of Creative Partnerships programmes on attendance. This found:

'Participation in Creative Partnerships was shown to be associated with an educationally significant reduction in total absence rates in primary schools and that this reduction increased over a period of some years as Creative Partnerships became more established in these schools. Total absence rates in schools that had been participating in Creative Partnerships for four years were almost one percentage point lower than in otherwise comparable schools with no history of involvement with Creative Partnerships.'⁵

It must be stressed that finding educationally significant statistical evidence is extremely rare, and indicates a strong probability that the only possible explanation of the evidence is that Creative Partnerships is the cause of the observed effect.

It is also consistent with the other research findings, in that poor attendance at primary schools is mainly the result of poor parental engagement. The fact that Creative Partnerships programmes have been shown separately to boost parental engagement and improve pupil motivation would create an expectation that attendance would improve. That the NFER study can independently confirm a dramatic improvement in attendance is highly significant.

The impact on the economy

Creative Partnerships programmes have also been shown to have an impact beyond schools. An independent study by the Burns Owens Partnership in 2006⁶ demonstrated that Creative Partnerships is having a significant impact on the development of individual creative practitioners:

'Creative Partnerships has nurtured a pool of practitioners and creative agents that are highly skilled, with a strong understanding of the education market.'

Thirty-five per cent of creative practitioners had been working in the sector for less than three years. This group of emerging professionals and new companies gained the biggest benefits from Creative Partnerships in terms of new skills, confidence and CV enhancement. This is a highly significant finding because traditional government training programmes are more successful in reaching the longest established and biggest companies.

Approximately half of creative professionals working with Creative Partnerships have developed other work and employed other creative professionals as a result of their involvement with the programme.

It is estimated that around 70 per cent of Creative Partnerships funding goes directly to creative practitioners. Given the benefits that Burns Owens Partnership has identified this is a very significant investment in the development of the creative industries in England.



'Creative Partnerships is a unique economic intervention that has impacted strongly and positively upon a core of creative and cultural practitioners'

Burns Owens Partnerships, 2006

⁵ 'The impact of Creative Partnerships on pupil behaviour', National Foundation for Educational Research, July 2008

⁶ 'Study of the Impact of Creative Partnerships on the Cultural and Creative Economy', Burns Owens Partnerships, July 2006



OFSTED:

The impact of Creative Partnerships

'Through the elected school council and participation in the Creative Partnerships scheme, pupils make meaningful contributions to school life and gain skills that form the basis of responsible citizenship.'

Ofsted report on Dale Community Primary School, 2007

In 2006, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) published a report⁷ on the Creative Partnerships programme after inspecting a sample of 36 schools. The findings of the Ofsted inspection corroborate many of the findings of the studies summarized previously, confirming that Creative Partnerships is delivering improvements in the aspiration and achievements of young people and in the skills and creativity of teachers.

Ofsted inspectors reported that they had seen evidence of significant improvements in the basic learning skills of young people who had participated in Creative Partnerships activities:

'Improvements in literacy, particularly writing, and speaking were significant in the majority of schools visited... Developing and applying mathematical skills in context was also an indicator of pupils' achievement which several schools identified... Pupils used information and communications technology (ICT) effectively to research, explore, develop and model ideas in and across different subjects.'

⁷ 'Creative Partnerships: Initiative and Impact', Ofsted, September 2006

Inspectors also found that the projects had improved the confidence and creative skills of young people:

‘Most Creative Partnerships programmes were effective in developing in pupils some attributes of creative people: an ability to improvise, take risks, show resilience, and collaborate with others. Creative practitioners, teachers and support staff clearly valued these as skills for pupils to develop and apply in order to express their own creativity. The majority of pupils interviewed knew these qualities were considered important.’

The development of these new skills and attributes contributes significantly to improvement in the overall attitude of young people to education:

‘Often the outcomes of programmes could be seen in changed attitudes and behaviours, and the demonstration of creative approaches to work. This represents a significant achievement; it included teachers who previously lacked belief in their own creativity and ability to inspire creativity in others, and pupils who were previously unconvinced by approaches to learning or the value of education.’

For some pupils their involvement in Creative Partnerships proved a turning point; good attendance and participation in learning continued beyond the project. In a small but significant proportion of schools, improvements in pupils’ attitudes and behaviour during projects signaled the start of a return to schooling.’

Inspectors also found that Creative Partnerships’ programmes were contributing to the Every Child Matters outcomes:

‘The vast majority of pupils directly involved enjoyed their education in and through Creative Partnerships; good behaviour, cooperation, enthusiasm and pride were common outcomes. Skills that were consistently improved – literacy, numeracy, ICT, self-confidence, team-working, an ability to show enterprise and handle change – are likely to contribute to pupils’ future economic well-being.’

The nature of particular initiatives enabled some pupils to develop good regard for the safety and well-being of others; they showed high levels of responsibility in potentially high risk situations such as handling different materials. In a smaller proportion of projects, pupils showed that they could manage personal stress, contributing to a healthy lifestyle. Opportunities for pupils to make a positive contribution to the community through Creative Partnerships programmes were valued by pupils; in community-based projects, pupils displayed high levels of social responsibility.’

Working with Ofsted over the period of its inspection of Creative Partnerships was an important episode in the development of the programme for two reasons:

- The observations of the inspectors on the beneficial impact of the programme confirmed the findings of wider research. They too observed the improvements in attainment, behaviour, motivation and attendance that had been suggested elsewhere.
- The recommendations of inspectors as to how the programme could be improved were welcomed by Creative Partnerships and have been implemented. In particular, attention has been paid to:



- Engaging local authorities in directing Creative Partnerships resources to those schools in most need of assistance.
- Ensuring that the reasons for a school’s inclusion in the programme were clear.
- Ensuring that the school’s aims were precise and that the needs of pupils had been assessed and incorporated in the programme planning.

It is these recommendations that informed the development of the new programme structure launched in 2008 and underpin the evaluation and monitoring systems that are now used across the programme.

Ofsted is currently conducting a further study into creativity. This has included visits to many Creative Partnerships schools. Although the report is not expected until the summer of 2009, the responses of inspectors to individual schools are now in the public domain. The following is an extract from the visit to the Creative Partnerships School of Creativity, Thomas Tallis Secondary School:

‘The school’s strong commitment to creative learning helps students to think for themselves, to work independently, and to apply freely what they have learned in other subjects. From the start of Year 7 students are encouraged to take a creative approach and they are aware that it will be valued. They become proud to show off their work, becoming more confident learners as a result.’

What next?



Students' personal development is outstanding, and there are clear and documented links between the use of creative tasks, increasing interest, involvement and enthusiasm, and the good or excellent learning that was seen in lessons. Vibrant lessons, in which students' thinking skills are actively promoted, result in achievement that is at least good. Creative learning techniques make a significant contribution to the quality of learning because students are active in producing work, and in assessing their own and one another's work against criteria. This promotes rapid progress.'

And this is from a visit to another Creative Partnerships School of Creativity, Rosehill Primary School:

'The school's approach to creative learning has a very positive impact on achievement because pupils are highly motivated to learn, whether this be in developing basic skills or applying their knowledge and understanding. By the end of Year 2, national tests show that standards are significantly above average. Pupils develop particularly good analytical skills because staff provide innovative structures to support this learning. For example, in Year 2 pupils confidently analysed the setting, sound, action and language of a film as part of a multimodality project. A much higher than average proportion of pupils reach the expected level by the end of Year 6, which reflects pupils' confidence in gaining new skills. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are much higher than expected. Pupils develop skills including producing sophisticated 3D animations very confidently or manipulating sound tracks to enhance the reading of the poems that have been written in literacy.'

Pupils are extremely confident, articulate and reflective. They acquire these skills through the many opportunities to take responsibility for creative projects, such as designing their own physical education activities to provide data for analysis in science. Pupils relish taking responsibility and are very proud of their achievements. They appreciate that they have to apply and train for their jobs, such as running the school office at lunchtimes. They have an excellent understanding of how to work as part of a team to agree on different key roles, handle a budget, produce a high quality outcome and appreciate each member's efforts. They systematically develop these skills through carefully sequenced creative learning projects each year. They show great confidence in taking part in events in the wider community. For example, the school is regularly successful in getting pupils to the national finals of a competition that can require the learning of three new languages: Dutch, Vietnamese and Zulu. Pupils are now in a good position to extend their analysis of how well they are developing skills of creative learning as they progress through the school.'

Both schools draw their pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Both schools are considered by Ofsted as outstanding. Both schools exemplify the capacity of Creative Partnerships to work with schools to use creative learning to deliver the best quality education for young people in England.

Creative Partnerships is currently planning for its future beyond 2009. Being a part of the new national organisation Creativity, Culture and Education opens up many exciting opportunities to expand the programme even further.

Our early thinking is that:

- Because our research shows the success of our work in **improving attainment**, we want to **increase our reach**, serving more young people, schools and areas, but still focused on where our help is most needed
- Creativity is vital to the next generation's **employability**, so our work is more important than ever in times of economic uncertainty
- Parents and the wider family underpin our work, and are better engaged with children's learning through creativity, so we want to **involve families more**
- The UK's **creative industries** are a strong force now and will be so in the future: our role is to connect them with young people, providing new business opportunities
- Communities that share culture are stronger, so we will continue to work beyond schools with our **Find Your Talent** and **Prevent** programmes
- **Pupils should be equal partners** in the development, delivery and evaluation of the programme
- A more diverse funding regime, leveraging resources from the education, cultural and business sectors will **make our work sustainable**.

This is an exciting time for Creative Partnerships and we would be happy to engage in any discussions about the future.

Paul Collard

Chief Executive officer
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